



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

XXVII.—*On the Destruction of the Aborigines of Chatham Island.* By W. TRAVERS, Esq.

[*Read March 7th, 1865.*]

I PROCEEDED to the Chatham Island Group by a schooner (the *Cecilia*, of 40 tons), which sailed from Lyttelton on the 12th October last. Our voyage was slow and somewhat uninteresting; and it was not until the 19th that we sighted the Horns—two conical-shaped hills on the south-western extremity of Chatham Island. On the way down we met large numbers of right whales, lump-backs, and porpoises, and were, as usual, accompanied by albatrosses and Cape pigeons. After sighting the main island, we proceeded directly to Pell's Island, and came to anchor off a rocky point forming the western extremity of a small bay at the north end of the Island, and at the head of which is the residence of Mr. Frederick Hunt, an Englishman, who had been settled there for nearly twenty years. Opposite Mr. Hunt's house is a rock called the Flower-pot, which forms a shelter for boats engaged in landing or shipping goods. The house is close to the beach, and is surrounded by about two hundred and fifty acres of cleared land, mostly laid down to English grasses, and divided into paddocks, forming a very compact and well cultivated farm. With the exception of these clearings, and of insignificant patches of open land in various parts of the island, the whole of Pell's Island is covered with beech.

I was received with great civility by Mr. Hunt and his family, who invited me to stay with them during the time I should be engaged in collecting plants, etc. On this occasion, however, I remained on Pell's Island for a week only, having been detained by a tremendous gale from the north-west. We left on the 26th, and reached Waitangi, a Maori settlement on Chatham Island, on the following day. Here I presented my letters to Captain Thomas, the Collector of Customs, by whom I was treated most courteously, and who promised to give me every assistance in his power in carrying out the objects of my journey.

Waitangi is the chief Maori settlement on Chatham Island, and is situated at the south-eastern extremity of Petre Bay, which forms an indentation, some seventeen or eighteen miles deep, on the south-western side of the island. But for this bay the shape of the island would have been nearly that of an isosceles triangle, of which the south-western side would have formed the base. A small but deep river flows into the bay close to Waitangi, washing

on its western side the foot of some low ridges of reddish sandstone. This river drains a considerable tract of hilly ground on the south side of the bay, and is also fed by a stream running from a lagoon at the head of the bay. Were it not for a bar at its mouth, vessels of from forty to fifty tons burthen might enter it, as, inside the bar, the water is deep for a considerable distance inland. The huts of the Maories and the residence of Captain Thomas are situated on low ground, on the east side of the river. The Maori huts are built of fern-posts, lashed together with strips of supple-jack, and thatched with toi-grass, resembling in all respects those found in the old Paho in New Zealand. Captain Thomas's residence is built in the same way, but is plastered inside and out with clay, and whitewashed, and the roof is shingled. A chapel belonging to the Church of England natives is a very handsome specimen of their style of building. The inside walls are lined with fronds of tree ferns, from which the pinnules have been stripped, and which are interwoven in a curious manner with leaves of *Phormium tenax*. The roof is braced with boards having white scrolls painted on a red ground. The outside walls and roof are closely and smoothly thatched with toi-grass. The building is about fifty feet long and nearly thirty broad, and about the same height to the top of the roof. There is a smaller building, used as a chapel by the Roman Catholic natives, built in the same style, but highly decorated and more neatly kept. The population of Waitangi, including a few More-ore slaves, numbers about one hundred and fifty, all told. Their huts are surrounded by well fenced paddocks, laid down to English grasses, but the grass is now almost smothered with the common English daisy, mustard, and dock, which are spreading rapidly over the whole island. The Maories generally possess considerable numbers of horses, cattle, and pigs, which run in common on the open lands and in the bush. They cultivate large quantities of potatoes, maize, pumpkins, and onions, which they supply to American whaling ships resorting to the islands, and occasionally export to New Zealand. I did not find that they cultivated any European fruits, but they use largely that of a small species of nightshade, indigenous to New Zealand, which they had introduced to the Chathams. There are also Maori settlements at Subong, on the north-western side of the island, and at Taupeka and Kaingaroa, on the north side, having altogether a population of some four hundred souls, all told.

The remnant of the More-ores (the name given to the aboriginal inhabitants), exclusive of the few who are still retained in slavery, is settled at Ohangi, on the south-eastern side of the island. They do not exceed two hundred in number, and are said to be rapidly decreasing. I believe this to be the case, for during my

six months' stay not less than eight deaths occurred amongst them. In their habits of living they now assimilate to the Maories, and speak a language compounded of their own original language and that of the New Zealanders. Before the invasion of the islands by the New Zealanders, which took place about the year 1832 or 1835, the More-ores were very numerous, numbering little short of fifteen hundred people. They are much shorter, but stouter built, than the New Zealanders, and have darker skins, but the same straight coarse hair. Their faces are rounder, and more pleasing in expression. Their noses are Roman in shape, resembling those of the Jews. They never tattooed, and although they originally practised cannibalism, they had discontinued it before the arrival of the New Zealanders. They appear to have been a very cheerful people, fond of singing and of telling laughable stories. Their habits of living, however, were originally very rude and improvident. They built no huts, merely using a few branches of trees stuck into the ground as a shelter from the wind, Their chief food consisted of fish, shell-fish, birds, and fern root; which latter they prepared in the same manner as the New Zealanders; but the women always eat apart from the men. Like many other savage tribes, they were very indolent, seldom seeking food until pressed by hunger. They had no canoes, there being no timber on the islands sufficiently large for constructing them; but they formed rafts of the flower stalks of the *Phormium tenax*, lashed together with supple-jack, and having an upright wooden stem ingeniously carved. The paddles were shaped like a spade, and were used at the stern of the rafts, very much in the same manner as a spade would be used in digging. They made stone axes, similar to those of the New Zealanders; and these, with clubs, etc., constructed from the harder woods growing on the islands, formed their weapons. In their own quarrels, it was understood that the first blood drawn terminated the battle. Such fights were uncommon, and were generally for the possession of a seal's carcase, or some mass of whale-blubber, which happened to be cast ashore, both of which were esteemed choice delicacies. They had no hereditary chiefs; the most successful fisherman, or bird-catcher, or any member of the tribe distinguished by extraordinary stature, or for any useful physical quality, being looked upon as an authorised leader. They had no idea of a God in our sense of the term, nor, so far as I could learn, of evil spirits; but they looked upon a good fishing or birding ground as being the gift, or rather under the charge, of an 'Alua' or good spirit. Their mode of disposing of their dead had special reference to the particular vocation or fancy of the living subjects. If the dead person had been a good fisherman, for example, his body was lashed, in a sitting posture, to a raft, and sent adrift with a baited

line in its hand. If he had been a noted bird-catcher, he was fixed in a stooping position, between two trees, facing the particular hill or other spot which he usually frequented. If he had no particular vocation, he was put, in a sitting posture, into an open hole in the ground, usually about eighteen inches deep, with any favourite piece of carved wood stuck up before him. So far as I could learn, the chronology of the More-ores, unlike that of the New Zealanders, is very defective; and, consequently, they are unable to fix, even proximately, the date of their first arrival in the islands. They say, however, that they came in two canoes, one of which drifted to sea again, but that the other was preserved for a considerable period. They are quite in the dark as to whence they originally came, but as they resemble the Mangaia Kanakas, who form a large proportion of the crews of the American whaling vessels, I conceive it is not improbable that they have the same origin.

The islands were invaded in 1832 or 1835 by the New Zealanders, by whom large numbers of the aborigines were killed and eaten. In fact, the expedition of the New Zealanders may be said to have been undertaken solely for the latter purpose; a Maori, who happened to have visited the islands whilst engaged as a seaman in a vessel trading from Sydney, having reported the aborigines as a plump, well-fed race, who would fall easy victims to the prowess of his countrymen. By a refinement of cannibal cruelty, the unfortunate wretches were compelled to carry the wood and prepare the ovens in which they were to be cooked. Such of them as were destined for the nonce to be eaten were then laid in a row upon the ground adjoining the ovens, and were killed by blows from a 'mere' by one of the Maori chiefs. It is not more than twenty years since the Maories gave up their feasts. Although I found the remains of numerous More-ore skeletons in the woods in Pell's Island, I was unable to get one in good condition. I have, however, brought over several authentic skulls, which will probably be interesting for ethnological purposes.

As I had determined to make Pell's Island my head quarters, in consequence of its offering greater advantages as a collecting ground, I took the opportunity of my first visit to Chatham Island to travel round it. Accordingly, in the month of October, accompanied by Mr. Hunt, who had come over with me from Pell's Island, I started for the Red Bluff, about six or seven miles north of Waitangi. The road led partly through a belt of bush, which for a depth of two or three miles forms a fringe round a large portion of the islands, and partly along the sea-shore. The weather, unfortunately, was extremely wet, as, indeed, it was during the whole of my stay on Chatham Island. The bush con-

sisted principally of Eurybias, Coprosmas, Karaka, Dracophyllum, Solanum, etc., with several tree ferns, amongst which I noticed Cyathea Dealbata; the whole so interwoven with our old friend the supple-jack as to be almost impenetrable. Amongst the ferns I found a Lomaria, closely allied to, if not identical with, Lomaria Discolor, Phymatodes Billardieri, and Pustulata, and several others common in the bush of New Zealand. On the beach, the Myosotidium nobile grew with rank luxuriance, wherever it had not been invaded by the pigs, which fed eagerly upon the roots. The Maories dry the leaves and smoke them, as a substitute for tobacco. Where the sea shore was sandy, I noticed a coarse grass, identical with one of those which occurs upon the Dunes near Christchurch.

From the Red Bluff we proceeded to Wanga-roa, on the north side of Petre Bay, and from thence, leaving a large tract of sand hills between that place and Tubong on our left, we crossed to Wari-Kawri, on the north side of the island. This route led us past several small lagoons, apparently destitute of water plants, but fringed partly with rushes and partly with bush similar to that before described. The country here is low, and is now covered with a young growth of grasses and sedges mixed with Pteris esculenta, and with occasional patches of Phormium tenax. On the sandy tract before alluded to (between Wangaroa and Tubong) I noticed large quantities of a small but beautiful shrub, growing amongst the sand grasses above referred to, and fern. From Wari-Kawri we proceeded to Taupeka, once a large Maori settlement, but now containing only a few huts. Here we slept, and on the next day went to Kainga-roa, travelling along a sandy beach fringed with bush, into which we occasionally passed in order to avoid rocky points projecting into the sea. With the exception of a Eurybia, I found no plants in flower; and, indeed, the weather was so extremely wet that I gave up all idea of collecting at that time. We remained at Kainga-roa for three or four days, one of which I spent at the residence of Mr. Shand, at Wakura, by whose family I was hospitably entertained. From Kainga-roa we went to Okawa or Waikerri, formerly the principal Maori settlement, and the chief scene of their cannibal festivities, and from thence returned to the Red Bluff, passing over the great lagoon, along a reef, which lies about a foot below the surface of the water, and crosses it from east to west. This reef is generally from forty to fifty yards broad, but occasionally narrows to fourteen or fifteen yards, and has a sloping bank on each side.

The lagoon is nearly twenty miles in length from north to south, and from eight to nine broad at the north end, narrowing to three or four at its southern extremity. It almost intersects

the island, the space between the north bank and the sea shore being little more than two miles broad; whilst, at the south-eastern end, it is only separated from the sea by a sand bank a hundred or a hundred and fifty yards in width. This bank is periodically broken through by the accumulated waters of the lagoon; the beach, after the lagoon has sunk to high water mark, being repaired by the wash of the sea from the south-east. The lagoon is in some places bordered by extensive spongy tracts of *Jungermania*, in others by grasses, sedges and rushes, and in others again by bush similar to that which occurs on the sea shore. I did not find any water plants, such as *Potamogeton*, etc., in any of the lagoons; though in the centre of a small lagoon on the north side of the island I observed some vegetable substances spread upon the surface of the water. In consequence, however, of the depth of the water, and of their distance from the edge of the lagoon, I was unable to obtain any specimens.

The general surface of Chatham Island, except of that part which lies to the south of Petre Bay, is low and slightly undulating, with occasional hills. For example, on the tract to the north of the bay to the left of the route from Wanga-rao to Wari-Kauri, there are three or four conical hills, attaining an elevation of six or seven hundred feet, and some lower hills near the sea coast on the north side of the island. These hills are clothed with bush from top to bottom. The country, to the eastward of the great lagoon, is very low, scarcely rising in any part more than fifty feet above sea level. The peninsula, to the south of Petre Bay, is more hilly, the hills presenting from Jenny Reef to Cape Fournier abrupt escarpments to the sea. The soil is peaty, and is often fifty feet deep. In several parts of the island this peat has been on fire for years, burning at a considerable depth below the surface, which, when sufficiently undermined, caves in, and is consumed. I have seen the loose ashes arising from these fires upwards of thirty feet deep. In one place I noticed, in the burning peat, at the depth of six or seven feet from the surface of the ground, the trunks of trees of a growth evidently far exceeding any that are now to be found on the islands. I was, I am sorry to say, unable to obtain any specimens, in consequence of the great height of the wall of peat and the mass of hot ashes below. The surface growth, inclusive of bush, consists principally of grasses and sedges, with patches of fern; but I have little doubt that a large number of indigenous herbaceous plants have been destroyed, partly by the constant firing of the surface by the natives, and partly by the pigs, cattle, and horses which roam all over it. Nearly the whole surface of the country had, in fact, been burnt shortly before my arrival.

There are, at present, but few land birds either on this or on Pell's Island. Formerly, the white crane (*Herodas flavirostris*), the bittern (*Botaurus melanotus*), an apterix, said by the Maories to have been identical with a New Zealand species, and also, according to their accounts, a smaller species of the same bird, the Weka (*Ocydromus Australis*), and the Kakapo (*Rhigops habroptelus*), were found on both islands, but have become extinct since their invasion by the New Zealanders. Mr. Hunt informed me that the last time he had seen the bittern was about three years ago. The land birds now found are a large falcon, the pigeon, the lui or parson bird, the pukeko (*Porphyrus melanotus*), the parakeet (*Platycercus N. Z.*, Dieff), the fantail, the pihoihoi or lark, and a small titmouse, all identical with the birds of the same species found in New Zealand. I was told by Mr. Hunt that the pigeon was first seen on the islands within the last eight years, and that the titmouse appeared shortly after the occurrence of the great fire in Australia, known as the Black Thursday fire. Mr. Hunt is a very careful and trustworthy person, and as his statement relative to the pigeon was confirmed by the Maories, I have full reason for believing what he told me in regard to both birds. Of aquatic birds, I saw the grey duck, brown teal, and two species of shag common in New Zealand, and a number of gulls and other sea birds similar to those which frequent the coasts of that country. Mutton birds were extraordinarily numerous on a rock known as the Fort, lying between Chatham and Pell's Islands. During my journey round Chatham Island, of which I have given you an account above, I saw a peculiar teal on one of the lagoons near the Red Bluff. This bird had bright scarlet markings on the wings. I fired at it, but owing to the great dampness of the weather the gun I had with me hung fire, and I missed the bird. I never saw another specimen, and was informed that it was very uncommon. The number of land birds of all kinds, however, is extremely limited. Indeed, it is rare to meet with any at all during a whole day's walk in the bush. I attribute their destruction principally to wild cats, the progeny of imported animals, although I was informed that a species of gull also attacks the land birds, and is especially destructive to poultry.

Besides wild cats, which are common on both islands, there are on Chatham Island swarms of the Norway rat and English mouse. I believe there were no indigenous terrestrial mammals on either island, not even a bat, but seals of several kinds, and whales and porpoises are abundant on the coasts, the former frequenting reefs at some distance from the shore.

I left Chatham Island about the 25th of November, and proceeded to Pell's Island, where I took up my residence with Mr.

Hunt. As I have before mentioned, the whole of Pell's Island, with a very trifling exception, is covered with bush. In my first rambles in the bush, both here and on Chatham Island, I was struck with the perfect identity of the great majority of the plants with those of New Zealand; but, as you will observe from the collections I made, I felt it my duty to take even those about which I had no doubt whatsoever.

In connection with the remarkable similarity of the flora generally with that of New Zealand, I may mention that, in a small tract of bush on the margin of the great lagoon, I found three trees of the *Edwardsia Microphylla*, all growing close together, and being the only specimen of that plant that I saw on either island. They were not in flower or fruit at the time. They were apparently all of equal age, and were about five inches in diameter and fifteen feet high. Mr. Hunt, to whom I pointed them out, stated that he had never seen the plant before. During my residence at Pell's Island, I was in the habit of examining the coast of the bay in which Mr. Hunt's house is situated twice a day for some months; and on one occasion I found a sawn plank of the totara, and on another a seed of the same *Edwardsia*, which had evidently been washed ashore, probably from New Zealand. The seed was hard and sound. I gave it to Mr. Hunt, who sowed it, but there has been as yet no time to learn the result. I also saw on the beach logs of white and red pines (*Dracrydium excelsum* and *Dracrydium mai*) and totora, which had been washed ashore some time previously. This would indicate the existence of currents direct from New Zealand to this place, probably favoured by the set from Cook's Straits and south-westerly gales.

There is but one hill on Pell's Island which does not exceed six hundred feet in height. It is perfectly flat-topped, the summit having an area of about eighty acres, covered with peat to the depth of five or six feet, and supporting a mixed growth of grass, fern, *Phormium tenax*, and shrubs. From the summit of this hill a good view of the whole group of islands is obtained. I was, unfortunately, unable to visit South-east Island, which appears to be the highest land in the group, and which I was told contained several plants not to be found on either Chatham or Pell's Island. I had one opportunity of visiting it, but owing to the great dampness of the season, I was afraid to leave my collections, which required unremitting attention. During one short absence I lost a very large number of plants, including my only specimens of *Euphorbia*, *Edwardsia Microphylla*, and *Mesembryanthum*, which, on my return, I found to be one mass of mildew. The several members of Mr. Hunt's family were, during the whole time of my stay, so busily employed in their various

duties, that I felt I could not impose upon them the extra task of attending to the plants, and this prevented me from visiting the various outposts and reefs connected with the Chatham Island group.

In regard to insects, etc., my knowledge is too limited for me to venture upon many observations respecting those which occur on the islands. I noticed, however, amongst others, the common New Zealand blue-bottle, and yellow flesh flies, and the European or Australian house fly. Mosquitoes and sandflies are abundant. In the bush I saw a considerable number of spiders, including one very large *Mygale*, which also frequented buildings, making its nest in the thatch. I found several beetles. Moths and butterflies were rare; the few I met with being apparently identical with New Zealand species.

Several introduced plants are spreading rapidly; for example, the white clover, the English daisy, the dock, the mustard, the English burr (which grows with the utmost rankness in the bush on Pell's Island, often to the height of three feet and upwards), the *Polygonum*, found on the Canterbury plains, the wild strawberry, and others. Indeed, from the luxuriance and rapidity with which these plants grow, I have little doubt that, if not checked, they would soon overcome and replace the indigenous herbaceous vegetation. All kinds of introduced vegetables grow with great vigour, and since the importation of bees, European fruit trees and bushes have produced freely. In conclusion, I would suggest that if any other person should be tempted to visit the islands for botanising purposes, the months from December to April inclusive would be found to be the best season.

END OF VOL. IV.